

# **Lumber recovered from 19<sup>th</sup> Century Farmhouse dripping with American history**

**By Jon Sinatra**

I recently had the opportunity to recover a partial amount of lumber from a century old farm house in Northern Colorado . This “gem” had been cut from various 18th century oak, cherry, sycamore, maple trees and more. Although additional rooms and upgrades were added-on through the 20th century, the originally built structure was still intact beneath these upgrades.

A brick stack, which accommodates a pot belly stove, runs up the exterior wall. Various sized milled window frames, that once held hand blown glass, hung within true 2 ¾ inch x 4 inch studs with an attached exterior weather board pattern of 1 inch thick by various widths of lumber. These boards, some of which still hold streaks of tree bark, had been axed to fit and 3 inch box nails fastened it all to hold. The interior side of the exterior boards had originally been wallpapered many times over, keeping out the elements that blew in between the single exterior wall boards. The day’s newspaper was first tacked to the wood surface and the wallpaper then glued to this and wrapped around each stud. A news article, under the first layer of wallpaper, read of Denver ’s 1895 November election of Judges, treasurer, constable, etc.



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19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY FARMHOUSE

Around 1910, a kitchen was added on to this house and a Denver news article under the first layer of this wallpaper reads the death notice of Colorado’s oldest woman. Mrs. Lucinda Janes, 101 years old, she had been an eyewitness to the battle of Lake Champlain. This battle, also known as the battle of Plattsburgh, was fought on September 11, 1814, during the War of 1812. The article goes on to read that Mrs. Janes, while growing up on the banks of Lake Champlain, recalled the march of the continental soldiers as they passed her house on the way to the battle that stopped the British invasion from Canada. She often told of scenes from that fight, which she watched from the porch of her father’s house. She had 4 children and outlived them all. One of her sons, Charles Janes, was an officer in the 7th New York Regiment during the Civil War. Mrs. Janes moved to Denver eleven years prior to her passing and resided at 1355 Josephine.

As I walked throughout this farmhouse, the bright and warm spirited “karma” from her was overwhelming. She had stood her ground, and sheltered for over a century and was now making room for modern progress - probably another Walgreen’s.

Looking over the original structure, questions regarding the mix of odds and ends and riches came into play. This very quaint house with only a single 1 inch thick wood wall, patch covered with very fine and low grade

wallpaper, some hand blown glass, and with probably a dirt floor, was perplexing. But may be explained in the following:

In the 1890s, John Mouat, a Scottish immigrant who had amassed a fortune in lumber, built over 200 buildings in Denver, helping to transform the town from a mining camp to the glittering city that it would become. Built along Cherry Creek, overlooking the rowdy mining camp below, Mouat built the “best” building for himself, his wife and five children.



LUMBER BARON INN, MOUAT HOUSE, DENVER COLORADO

Showcasing his finest “wares” in the 8,500 square foot mansion, each room featured a different type of wood varying from oak to cherry to sycamore, maple and more. With an eye for detail, every fire place mantle included distinct carvings and fine details. Wood in the dining room included numerous carved rosettes representing the varied species of trees used in the guest rooms, each which had its own private bath and a phone. The third floor, which the Mouats utilized to host lavish parties, featured a 20 foot pyramid ceiling and a shining maple floor. It was the largest and grandest house in the neighborhood.

It is surmised that the builder of the farmhouse may have had a connection to the Mouat house, as they were both built around the same time and of the exact same materials. As I sanded away over 100 years of dirt and wear from this lumber, it is unmistakably oak, cherry, sycamore, maple and more, most of which was growing within the colonies during the time of the American Revolution and the War of 1812. Needless to say, this lumber, with all of the American history dripping from it, beckoned a monument. Thus, I built it one.



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In the 1850s, lumber mills changed from using large straight saw blades to using large circular saw blades. These blades were powered by water wheels and took a painful amount of time to cut through stock. These circular blade marks are seen here, as they were used for decoration rather than sanded away. The top reading surface, of this podium is 15 inches deep by 24 inches wide. A bronze coin commemorating the signing of the Declaration of Independence, suspends within a thick clear coat upon the surface. While sanding this piece, a partial image of a bell appeared in the top right corner (see photo below right). The scroll work, under this surface, was cut by hand and a SAR Maltese Cross embedded. In the photo below, notice the bark still attached to the book stop. This podium was cut from maple, cherry, pine, and Douglass-fir. It was made in 3 sections and assembles and disassembles as such without hardware. The two news articles mentioned above, were “decoupage” on the bottom of the base. A gavel base soon will be added, and when a design is figured, there shall be light...



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